



Bedford Public Library Reference Services Guideline

Purpose

The Bedford Public Library is dedicated to supporting and empowering the lifelong learners of our diverse community by providing access to information, knowledge, and ideas as well as reference resources and services. These services include research guidance, homework help, reader advisory, interlibrary loan services, referral services, and assistance using the Library's computers, digital resources, and various technology.

Goals

- 1.1 Provide sufficiently trained and educated staff who can offer timely, accurate, and useful information to patrons.
- 1.2 Offer the same quality of service to all, regardless of age, race, gender, nationality, educational background, disability, sexual orientation, or any other criteria which may be the source of discrimination.
- 1.3 Create and take advantage of opportunities to educate and train patrons on all aspects of Library use in order to promote greater self-sufficiency and more effective utilization of the Library's resources.

Methods of Service

Desk Service

- 2.1 While at the service desks, staff will prioritize service to the public over any other duties. In-person reference will take priority over phone and digital reference. If there are multiple patrons needing assistance, requests that are directional or brief in nature may be given priority over lengthy or complex questions. Staff will set reasonable limits on the amount of time and level of response given to patron requests for information in order to ensure equal and fair access to library services for all patrons.
- 2.2 Library staff will conduct reference interviews to determine the information needs of the patron and will rely on reputable sources and professional judgment to determine the most accurate and authoritative answers. Source citations will be provided to the patron. The patron's reference questions will be kept confidential.
- 2.3 If the information requested by a patron proves to be beyond the scope of the resources available at the Library, or if the information requested is deemed to be so complex as to necessitate time-consuming research that will require reference staff to neglect the needs of other patrons or other key job responsibilities, the patron will, if possible, be referred to other libraries or agencies that might be able to provide more help.
- 2.4 Library staff will refer the patron to other appropriate sources, agencies, organizations, or institutions when the query cannot be answered to the satisfaction of the patron using Library resources.
- 2.5 Staff cannot guarantee the validity or accuracy of information retrieved from any resource.

Phone Service

- 2.6 Phone reference should take no more than 5-10 minutes and be limited to a reasonable number of questions. Staff will use best professional judgment in these cases. Reference questions of a more complex nature will be handled in person at the Library.

Email & Text Service

- 2.7 Email and text questions will be answered in the order in which they are received. Reference questions of a more complex nature will be handled in person at the Library.



- 2.8 Email and text questions are monitored and answered during operating hours, except for the last hour before close due to staff closing procedures.

Scope of Service

- 3.1 Staff does not give medical, legal, copyright, financial, or tax advice.
- 3.2 Staff cannot provide technical support or troubleshooting for personal computers or devices. Library staff members are not technology experts and may not be able to provide assistance with certain computer operating systems, software, or applications. Due to staffing and time constraints, staff cannot offer time-consuming or in-depth computer or software instruction.
- 3.3 Staff cannot offer job hunting or career advice beyond connecting the patron with helpful resources.
- 3.4 Staff never refers patrons to individual practitioners – physicians, attorneys, mental health professionals, or others.
- 3.5 The Library does not provide genealogy reference due to limitations of collection and electronic resources. Patrons will be referred to other libraries.
- 3.6 Library staff does not provide an appraisal of books, works of art, antiques, coins, stamps, currency, or other collectibles but will provide contact information for appraisal services derived from professional association directories.
- 3.7 Library staff does not provide translation services. Staff may make referrals to online translation services.
- 3.8 Beyond general reader recommendations, Library staff does not provide personal critical analyses, interpretations, or judgments regarding the merit of literary or other works.
 - 3.8.1 Through reader recommendations, staff will offer advice and suggestions for any reading material (fiction or nonfiction) as this is an essential service in a public library. Each patron's reading tastes will be taken seriously and without judgement. However, when performing reader recommendation services, personal interpretation and suggestions are unavoidable.
 - 3.8.2 Service is to be provided in a manner consistent with the Library Bill of Rights, the American Library Association Code of Ethics, and copyright law.
- 3.9 Library staff does not provide typing, proofreading, editorial services, or image searches to library users.
- 3.10 Patrons conducting patent and trademark research will be directed to helpful resources. Staff does not conduct patent or trademark research for patrons.
- 3.11 Questions of an inappropriate nature, as determined by Library staff, will not be answered. Staff will not engage in conversation or debate of a personal nature, including (but not limited to) religious beliefs, political positions, or personal lives.
- 3.12 Patrons may not request to work exclusively with a particular staff member.

Use of Digital Resources, Databases, & Internet

- 4.1 Staff will instruct and/or guide patrons to its subscription-based online resources made accessible on the Library's website. Staff will use professional judgment to determine when a fee-based database is the most appropriate and authoritative resource to answer the patron's question.



Reference Materials

- 5.1 The Library holds a small collection of non-circulating reference materials in order to ensure access at all times that the Library is open.

eBook a Librarian Service

The Library recognizes assisting a patron with the use of its digital collections may take longer than a 5-10 minute transaction at the service desk thus necessitating a longer session. eBook a Librarian (eBAL) is a by-appointment service that the Library provides for adult BPL cardholders who want one-on-one assistance utilizing our digital libraries & checking out ebooks, audiobooks, & digital magazines.

- 6.1 eBAL service is available to adult Library cardholders with accounts in good standing who want help checking out ebooks, audiobooks, and digital magazines through its digital libraries.
- 6.2 Appointments may be made using the online eBAL form or the paper eBAL form.
 - 6.2.1 Patrons are limited to 2 appointments per month for up to 30 minutes per appointment. When an appointment exceeds 30 minutes, the patron will either be connected to resources to continue with self-directed learning or s/he will be asked to make another appointment if s/he has not already had two (2) that month.
 - 6.2.2 Appointments are available at the Library during operating hours. No appointments will be scheduled on evenings, City holidays, Saturdays, or Sundays.
 - 6.2.3 Patrons requesting eBAL appointments must allow at least seven (7) days advance notice. A Library staff member will contact the patron about her/his appointment within that time.
 - 6.2.4 Based on staff availability, BPL staff will determine who will assist the patron for the appointment.
- 6.3 Library staff will make a reasonable attempt to help the patron troubleshoot issues relating to the use of its digital collections. If a resolution is not found during one (1) 30-minute eBAL session, staff will find an outside computer/mobile device service the patron can contact for further assistance.



Date submitted _____

Staff initials _____

Bedford Public Library eBook a Librarian

eBook a Librarian is a by-appointment service that the Library provides for adult BPL cardholders who want one-on-one assistance utilizing our digital collections & checking out ebooks, audiobooks, & digital magazines.

Please complete the form below. A staff member will contact you within 7 days to arrange your 30-minute appointment. A patron may make no more than 2 appointments per month.

Your Contact Information

You must provide either e-mail or phone contact information.

Full name _____ E-mail address _____

Your BPL card # _____ Phone # _____

Which device are you using?

Tablets/Phones:

___ iPad/iPhone

___ Kindle Fire

___ Android tablet/phone

Dedicated eReaders:

___ Kindle Paperwhite

___ Nook

___ Other (please specify)

Which statement below best applies to your situation?

- I need help getting started with (choose one)...
- ___ Overdrive/Libby ebooks or audiobooks
 - ___ CloudLibrary ebooks or audiobooks
 - ___ RBDigital magazines or audiobooks

- I have a specific problem with the app or an ebook/audiobook. *(If so, please provide details about the problem, including any error messages you've gotten & the title of the ebook/audiobook.)*

Appointment Information

Please check each box indicating the times & days you are available.

	10am	11am	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						

Please note, due to low staffing levels:

This service is not available on Saturday and Sunday.

This service is not available from 12pm-2pm and 6pm-close.

Is there anything else we need to know about your availability?

eBook a Librarian appointments will not exceed 30 minutes.

